



Hyatt Regency Saipan's management and staff gather around the 20-foot Christmas tree for their annual lighting ceremony last Tuesday.

BEA CABRERA

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Hyatt Regency Saipan officially started the Christmas season in the CNMI by lighting their 20-foot Christmas tree on the day of their 40th anniversary. The ceremony was made simple this year to comply with social distancing regulations and attended by Hyatt management, staff, employees, and hotel guests with their families.



"Our lighting of the tree is a good reminder of tradition, bringing people together and a promise of good things to come. Christmas to me is all about happy memories, a time for giving and forgiving. As for my Christmas wish, I will give it up for somebody else to get his or her wish."

—Hyatt Sous chef Zen Tomokane

"Christmas is often about other people, particularly in the hospitality service where you do not do the job because you enjoy being away on the holidays, but you do it to bring that joy to everyone else. Lighting of the Hyatt tree means another year of service to the CNMI. This year is a bit subdued than normal because we don't have the carolers, the bands, and big fanfare that we usually do but this brings us back to important things in life—the Hyatt employees and their families that are here."

—Hyatt Food & Beverage manager Ty Pauling



"Christmas is the best season of the year and to me it means family. The lighting of the tree prepares us for the real celebration of Christmas and with it, I wish good

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health for my family and for the COVID-19 vaccine to arrive so that things will go back to normal."

—Hyatt supervisor Gino Libuw

"Christmas is definitely about family and the lighting of the tree represents the family that we have here at the hotel. It is significant for us because it marks the many years we have been here on Saipan. I have been with Hyatt for 27 years and 22 of that were spent with Hyatt Regency Saipan. My wish for Hyatt is to remain on Saipan. Hyatt is a great employer. We have been blessed to be here that long and we hope to continue to be here."

—Hyatt director of rooms
Rosalyn Quinpanilla



My Christmas wish is not for me but for Hyatt to get its lease agreement renewed."

—Almond Santos of
Hyatt Engineering Dept.

"Christmas is a time for being grateful for what happened and received in 2020. It is also a time of reflection. This year is very special because we chose to light the tree on our anniversary day. ...Like me, most of the staff



wish that the lease will get renewed and Hyatt can continue to be here and be part of the community for a long time. Hyatt Regency Saipan has been a part of our life and community."

—Hyatt learning
manager Denise Montenegro

"On our 40th anniversary and lighting of our Christmas tree, we want to see people with smiling faces and just enjoy. Despite the many difficulties this year has brought to our island and the whole world, we want to celebrate it like it is just an ordinary year. My Christmas wish is get new lease."

—Hyatt general manager Nick
Nishikawa



"Christmas is for family, friends, and co-workers. As a company, we share and feel the Christmas spirit together. It's officially Christmas at the Hyatt and we must show gratefulness and happy times. My Christmas wish is for our lease to get extended so we will have jobs to support our families."

—Hyatt housekeeping team leader
Jonathan Cepeda

"Christmas is a time for family and friends to gather. Lighting the tree gives us hope that there is something good and better out there

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Hyatt Regency Saipan management led by general manager Nick Nishikawa, left, raise their hands forming 4-0, which means 40 years of Hyatt service and community partnership in the CNMI.

BEA CABRERA



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that makes us forget what is happening around the world right now, especially with the pandemic. We also hope that the new lease agreement will come through so we can still stay and keep our guests happy and provide for our families."

—Hyatt housekeeping team leader
Frank Camacho

"Christmas is about celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ and because through Him, we are saved. My wish is for Hyatt to have another 40 year [lease]."

—Hyatt director of Finance **Evan Yamagishi**



"Christmas is about being with family and here at the Hyatt, even in our workplace, we are family and spending this time at the workplace is still like spending time with family. The lighting of the Hyatt Christmas tree is a tradition. I've been working here for five years and I never missed one. I am glad we have this, especially during these hard times. I wish they extend the lease so all of us here can still continue to work together."

—Leigh Anne Gases, supervisor at Club Elan

"Christmas is family, love, and signifies the start of the Christmas festivities and our busiest season. I hope we can pick up more business because it has been slow due to COVID-19. As for my Christmas wish, extend our lease please!"

—Hyatt events system manager
Kovanni Cabrera



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Cheers!



Hyatt: Service driven, a legacy in the making

By **BEA CABRERA**
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

For 40 years, Hyatt Regency Saipan has not only touched the lives of its guests but it has remained steadfast in being a partner of the CNMI business community by being involved in programs, events, and fundraising projects that help boost and uplift the economy and community relationships.

In an interview with business leaders, they all spoke as one in the hope that Hyatt Regency Saipan will continue to serve the CNMI community, spread joy, and inspire other business organizations to make the CNMI a better place.



Guerrero

“From the owners, Kobe Portopia Hotel Corp., to the Hyatt management and staff, everyone have been so wonderful to our family for many years. Whenever we have any kind of function, they are always providing the best possible service. My daughter’s wedding reception was held here years ago. We were frequent guests of Sunday brunch when it was still Oceana Room and we frequented the Trader Bar as well and so we have seen our family really grow up at Hyatt. I would like thank them for their participation in the community as they have been a wonderful addition, not just for the tourists but for the local community as well. They make us feel we are really valued in the services they provide. The community is really supportive about their lease agreement negotiations. I know there are many hoops and loops to get through but if everybody comes together in the bargaining table, I hope Hyatt will stay for another 40 years.”

— **Roberto Guerrero, executive director of Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance**

“Hyatt is a true partner in building the CNMI’s economy. Over the years, they provided jobs to our local residents and helped boost our economy. ...As a Chamber member, Hyatt has been very supportive and they’ve always participated in all our activities and provided for opportunities for their



Palacios

staff to participate in our committees and our board. They have contributed to our events for scholarships, making them an active and great member of the community. Part of my work in the Chamber is working with the Hotel Association of the Northern Marianas Islands to help hotels with leases coming up, including Hyatt. We work on compromise and provisions that are agreeable to both Department of Public Lands and HANMI. ... We definitely support the renewal of Hyatt’s lease as they been here 40 years. It will be good to sustain their place in the community and we don’t want to see a long-time company go as they are part of the CNMI family.”

— **Velma Palacios, president Saipan Chamber of Commerce**



Calvo

“The combination of an awesome management and staff makes Hyatt Regency Saipan a great team. I am grateful that that they remained here and have grown even stronger despite the global pandemic, economic crisis, and super typhoons. One thing I really admire about the company is how they take good care of their employees. Employees for them are family and as such they operate as a family. They train employees to excel and reach new heights. The whole Calvo Enterprise and family identifies Hyatt as their home away from home.”

— **Marcia Calvo, account executive of Calvo's Insurance**



Benavente

“I worked at Hyatt Regency Saipan a couple of times in my career. The training I received from Hyatt helped me develop as a person and I attribute all my good posi-

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FROM THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF

DELTA TRADING CO., LTD.
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HYATT

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tive professional training to them. ...We cannot afford to let Hyatt leave the CNMI and I am sure both parties—DPL and Hyatt—will decide with what is good for the CNMI.”

—**Labor Secretary Vicky Benavente**

**Tenorio**

“Happy birthday Hyatt Regency Saipan! It’s been really great that they have been around for 40 years in the CNMI. Aside for being a 5-star hotel giving wonderful service and employing locals, we thank them for always reaching out to the community, especially their support to many educational programs at the Northern Marianas Trade Institute and Northern Marianas College.”

—**Janice Tenorio, customer service manager of IT&E**

“Happy birthday, Hyatt, and congratulations for 40 years. Thank you for being a wonderful member of our community and providing so many opportunities for many people.”

**McMahon**

—**Nolani P. McMahon, SCC marketing**

**Guerrero**

“Hyatt has always been a delight in terms of dining and special occasions for many families in the CNMI. We would often spend birthdays and anniversaries at the Hyatt Giovanni’s, which we miss. They have been very accommodating and very easy to work with when we have functions with them. ...They make you feel that you are welcome... and you feel like it’s your second home. It’s nice to have that in a small community. I am optimistic that their lease will get renewed, that all parties involved will find a middle ground and I think I join most people in the community that would like to see Hyatt remain on island.”

—**Joe Guerrero, owner of Naked Fish in Garapan.**

“My family and I love to go to Hyatt for lunch, dinners, and

**Soledad**


Sunday brunch. I wish them the happiest of anniversaries on their 40th year. Sous chef Zen Tomokane, Food and Beverage director Tai Pauling, and everyone always gives excellent service. I absolutely hope that their lease gets renewed as Hyatt is an icon in the community. We are all rooting for them.”

—**Rose Soledad, IT&E CNMI general manager**

**Laszlo**

“I am grateful for all that Hyatt does, for being a wonderful business partner to the Chamber and the rest of the community. ...Many times they’ve sponsored our events that we have going on for the scholarship program and for simply being there when we need it always. I hope that we continue to have another 40 years of Hyatt.”


—**Maxine Laszlo, executive director, Saipan Chamber of Commerce**



Happy

40th

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FROM THE MANAGEMENT & STAFF OF

CN CHUNG NAM CORP.

'I hope people of the CNMI want to see the new Hyatt'



BEA CABRERA

Hyatt Regency Saipan general manager Nick Nishikawa.

By **BEA CABRERA**
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

A veteran in hotel management before coming to Saipan 12 years ago, Hyatt Regency Saipan general manager Nick Nishikawa himself acknowledges that his first impression when he first stepped foot in the hotel was that the design and structure are old and not at par with Hyatt standards around the world.

Nishikawa hopes that this would change after they get the much awaited lease renewal for another 40 years from the Department of Public Lands.

At the same time, he was impressed with the consistent 5-star service of its staff, which, paired with good maintenance and upkeep, has enabled Saipan Regency Saipan to celebrate its 40th anniversary last Tuesday.

"When I came here, I thought the hotel was old and not quite the same with the Hyatt hotels worldwide. ...The building may be outdated but what made it robust and young was the quality of people and staff working here—5-star standard then and is still the same today, even with the pandemic," he said. "We want to do the renovations but

because of the expiring lease agreement, we couldn't do it. I told my staff to maintain, clean, and do whatever we can at the moment. ...When we get the lease renewal, I tell you, when we renovate using the Hyatt design team and technical service...this hotel is going to be fantastic."

"I hope the people of the CNMI wants to see the new Hyatt," he added.

This kind of optimism is what brought Hyatt Regency Saipan this far to the end of their lease agreement with the CNMI government. Nishikawa said that their vision to remain in the CNMI is unbreakable. "You read in the newspapers that one or two documents are missing or incomplete in the submission of our proposal or packet. We would like the community to understand that this is the first time we are applying for a lease extension and it is quite difficult to prepare everything during this pandemic," Nishikawa said. "Three weeks ago I was in Japan to discuss with owning company (Kobe Portopia Hotel Corp.) and Hyatt. Both parties are willing to extend and expect that the CNMI government will decide in our favor. The owning company and Hyatt are ready to make a new management contract between them. ...

The owner is happy with the progress going into the submission of documents with DPL. ...Of course, they are willing to continue Hyatt operations when we get the lease extension."

Through the pandemic, force majeure and economic crisis, Nishikawa's leadership remains steadfast. "The past months have been very difficult and this is the same with other hotels. I had a discussion with the owner and Hyatt whether we should close or not because ceasing the operations of the hotel entails less expense than keeping it open. ...But we don't have the heart to close the hotel and was told by the owner to do whatever we can do to serve the guests," he said. "So we never closed the hotel and accommodated people from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and contractors and they have been with us for quite some time. We appreciate them for what they are doing for the islands and the people the CNMI."

According to Nishikawa, accommodation and restaurant service are starting to re-

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sume but with limited operations. "Winter and Christmas season is the peak months for this hotel. I have been receiving a lot of inquiries from regular customers from Japan and Korea who always stay here for a month or two to get away from the cold," he said. "They know Saipan is a safe place but becomes hesitant because of the five-day mandatory quarantine. ...This is killing the economy, not only for this island but everywhere. But no matter what, we cannot compromise health and safety."

Also due to the pandemic, Nishikawa had to let go of many employees to keep the hotel afloat. "When business comes back slowly, one by one we will call them back as they are our first priority. ...I know I cannot control this pandemic and we are just doing everything we can where we have control over—expenses and operation cost. We have 120 staff right now and we have to take care of them, the owning company and the Hyatt brand name," he added.

Though vaccines are on the way, Nishikawa and his team is still expect everything to return to normal

in the second half of 2021. "I think tourism will change and we will have a new kind of tourists after the pandemic but Hyatt will be ready to target those people. ...We are also looking forward to other international brands opening on Saipan like [Crowne Plaza brand] because I definitely understand [that] one international brand can only do a little and maybe two international hotels can do better for this destination. ...Other islands in Asia have many international hotel brands,

thus tourism is booming over there and this island needs that," he said.

"I believe that Hyatt's success is backed by people who have been working for this hotel for many years. ...Hyatt will never cease to be a family-oriented company that takes care of its staff like family and this care extends to the community. ...This means we are proud working for Hyatt and that makes a big difference. ...Our quiet but strong spirit remains here (points to his heart)," he added.

'Hyatt at 40 is historic'

Hyatt director for Human Resources Josephine Mesta. BEA CABRERA

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Josephine Mesta can't help but get sentimental when she looks back and see how far Hyatt Regency Saipan has gone in the past 40 years.

In fact, Mesta, who is Hyatt's director for Human Resources, worked at the hotel when it was still the Continental Hotel.

"So I am almost making a full circle. ...It's been a wonderful ride for me as a career," she said.

For the 40 years that the hotel has been in operation in the CNMI, Mesta said that they have been actively involved in the community. "We are a company that believes that we have a social responsibility, wherever we are at," she said. "The past few months have been filled with many bittersweet moments, especially at this time of the pandemic. We had to let go of several employees who came in at the same time as I did. ...It's heartbreaking [but]

cest la vie, we didn't create the situation but we have to respond to it."

Mesta saw the growth of the Hyatt workforce over the years and is proud of the loyalty many of them have showed. "It is interesting to see the evolution of this business. ...When I started, it was 20% U.S. workforce but now it's 100% U.S. workforce. ...Sadly, we lost a lot of our key players, the ones who are experienced and I hope some of them would return somehow," she said.

"Our mentality is the work that we do is more than just a job and a lot of employees share the same sentiments we have. We have employees who probably have an average of 10-plus years and one 30-plus years. It is where we grew up. ...I was in my prime when I joined Hyatt...but I wouldn't trade it [for other careers]. ...Even after 27 years, I still feel I have more to do here not only in the coming days but hopefully for the next 40 years," she added.

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